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UNCLAS RANGOON 000927

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SUBJECT: BURMA: EDUCATION MINISTER OUSTED, MORE CHANGES TO COME?

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Burmese regime announced on August 11 changes in leadership at two ministries and within the Prime Minister's office, including the firing of the Minister of Education. The mini-shuffle may be a further rooting out of former-PM Khin Nyunt loyalists and sources indicate more "adjustments" are imminent. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) The SPDC announced in official state media that, effective August 10, Education Minister U Than Aung had been dismissed. His replacement is the current Deputy Minister of National Planning and Economic development, Dr. Chan Nyein, a mechanical engineer and a graduate of Rangoon Institute of Technology. Despite the change, the Ministry of Education remains one of only two ministries run by career civil servants (the other being the Ministry of Health). Active or former military officers head all other ministries.

3. (SBU) The regime's official orders, signed by Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Thein Sein, replaced Chan Nyein at the Ministry of Planning with new Deputy Minister Col. Thurein Zaw. The orders also announced that the regime had retired two ministers from the Office of the Prime Minister, U Than Shwe and Brigadier General Pyi Sone, a former Commerce Minister. The SPDC did not name their replacements.

4. (SBU) COMMENT: It is unusual for the regime to terminate a senior official, as in the case of Education Minister U Than Aung. Retirement or reassignment are the standard "face-saving" methods to make top-level changes. Than Aung's ouster, and the other changes, may reflect a continued ferreting out of former-PM Khin Nyunt's cronies. The retirements within the PM's office follow by less than a week the apparent dismissal of Cabinet Secretary, U Soe Tint, and SPDC chief of staff, Lt. Col. Pe Nyein. Embassy sources believe similar changes may take place soon at the Ministries of Construction, Post and Telecommunications, Progress for Border Areas, and Livestock and Fisheries. END COMMENT.
Stoltz